

**A Tribute to
Our Lamented Queen**

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EXPLANATION.

ON the Sunday following the death of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, the morning service of the American Presbyterian Church was of a memorial character. The Church was simply but most effectively draped with the national colors against a background of black. At the close the congregation stood in reverent silence during the rendering of the "Dead March in Saul." The sermon was preached without any thought of publication, but as many detained by sickness wished to read it, and others desired to have it as a memento of the deeply impressive occasion, I have yielded to the requests to have it printed.

T. S. McWILLIAMS.

MONTREAL, Jan. 29th, 1901.

Matt. 25 : 20-21.

" And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, : lo, I have gained other five talents. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. "

WHEN last we assembled here, it was under the beloved name and beneficent rule of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria ; to-day we come together under the name and reign of His Imperial Majesty King Edward VII. From the millions of her mourning subjects—yea from the good and true of all the world—has gone forth the sorrowful whisper—" The Queen is dead ! " Yes, the greatest Monarch of the World's greatest Empire has passed to her rest and reward. Not only throughout her far-stretching realm, but throughout the civilized world to-day, will congregations come together with a chill consciousness of an overhanging cloud, and myriads of ministers with subdued and sorrowing hearts will try with words to weave some wreath to lay as a humble tribute upon the casket of the Queen. I would not indulge in unearned superlatives or fulsome praise, but it is simple truth to say that she has been the purest and greatest sovereign that English history records. Only her ancestor, Alfred the Great, could for a moment be brought into comparison with her. But while King Alfred is only dimly seen in the halo cast about him by legend and poetry, Queen Victoria, in the white and searching light of the 19th century, is seen to be not only a good and great monarch, but a model of pure Christian womanhood. In every sphere of that long life on which the rays of public observation and criticism were constantly

focused, she has been found stainless and admirable. As a young maiden, she won the world's admiration by her simplicity and dignity, and by her industrious preparation for her coming responsibilities. As the wife of a husband of her own choosing, she was a model to every home of faithfulness, devotion and love. She was the affectionate mother of many children, whom she ruled and trained as a mother should, ever teaching them that character was of more importance than rank. Her high example is a rebuke to all those who disdain the chains of wedlock, or shrink from the gains and responsibilities of motherhood. As a widow, she never ceased to honor the memory of her beloved husband. In fact, a finer example of domestic life in all of its relations could hardly have been set. Not only was her personal life so pure that no stray breath of blemish ever attached to her name, but she actively exerted her influence and authority to expel immorality from her presence. She demanded clean living among those that had entrance to her court. It has not always been so. Kings and queens have not always been examples of purity. Royal courts have not always been Edens of simplicity. And the value of her example and influence upon the morality of the nation and the world has been simply incalculable. It is commonly said that a British monarch in these days *reigns* but does not *rule*. We may well be thankful for the degree of truth that there is in that statement. We are glad that our sovereign's rule is parliamentary rather than personal, that this is a constitutional rather than an absolute monarchy. And yet within the constitutional limits she exerted a guiding and moulding influence upon the government of her empire. She never hindered the democratic trend of the times, but rather encouraged the growing recognition of the people's rights. She may have had her personal preferences for certain statesmen, but she never allowed these preferences to influence the public policy. In the performance of her duties she was most conscientious. It has been said that she would never sign a state paper without complete knowledge of it. She favored the legislation that aimed at the enfran-

chisement of her people and the eradication of feudalism and tyranny. She sorrowed over the sufferings of her subjects as a mother might sorrow over her sons. She hated war, and it was largely due to her that peace was not oftener interrupted during her long reign. Her expressed wish was to end her reign with Britain at peace with all the world. The saddest thing in connection with her death was that this wish was not gratified. The sorrows of the South African war weighed heavily upon her great and tender heart. Indeed, it seemed that she grieved away the feeble remnant of strength that time had left her over the death of her sons, her soldier boys. Her heart had not grown old. Time could not quench her mother-love for every one of her subjects.

The world will long speak of the Victorian Age, as it speaks of the Elizabethan Age. The Victorian will stand side by side with the Elizabethan, as the two that have given greatest distinction to England's history and literature. The former reign lasted 45 years, and gave England's history some of its most brilliant pages and England's literature some of its very proudest names. Queen Victoria's reign lasted 63 years. During that long time to quote from an editorial already referred to, "the British Empire has been developed and consolidated by immense extension of its Indian and South African empire, by the populating of Canada and Australia, and by the enormous advance of manufactures and all the arts of material civilization in Great Britain itself, by its rule of the seas, and most by the perfected powers of its free people and free Parliament. In literature and in science it has created a revolution. The dearth of great writers since Shakespeare and Milton has been broken by a brilliant succession of poets, historians and philosophers; while the scholars, the discoverers, the inventors of these six decades have shed eternal glory on the name of their Queen, as on their own names."

Remembering that some here besides myself are native Americans, it may not be amiss to add a word or two concerning America's appreciation of Britain's lamented Queen. There are some people so short-sighted that they

cannot see beyond the eddies, and fail utterly to appreciate the depth and breadth of the great current of American opinion. These are so alert to any unkind words or ungenerous acts of our neighbors that they will not listen for the good. They magnify the fact that the mayor of a single city, pandering unworthily to the embittered subjects of Her Majesty who had found a home in that city, refused to half-mast the flag over the city hall ; but they ignore the fact that the flag floats at half-mast over the President's mansion, over the public buildings in most of the American cities (which was never done so generally for any foreign ruler before), and that in cities like New York and Boston the evidences of mourning are said to be more general than in Montreal. I cannot more fittingly express America's estimate of Her Majesty than by quoting the words of an eminent American editor : " For the first time in the annals of the world, the whole race gathers in sincere grief at the death-bed of a universal friend." " We are all your Majesty's subjects," wrote the Arbitration Commissioner at the Hague. " The great western Republic, the great free self-governing states of her empire, Canada, the Australian states, New Zealand, India, and the minor dependencies, an hundred and thirty millions of the dominant race were bound together by the common tie of homage for the Empress-Queen." In the death of Queen Victoria the people of the United States have lost the best friend they ever had beyond their own borders. The ties which bound them together were those of blood and filial love. It was not that of their own race and language had risen the greatest and purest sovereign that history records, though in that they took a just pride ; it was not that when our national life was trembling in the balance, and when all the potent men of England were our enemies, she stood with immovable firmness for us, though for that we shall remember her with immortal gratitude ; nor was it only because her life was an example which brought purity and domestic loyalty to every home, whether in cottage or palace." The tie was deeper and stronger than all these ; it was the bond

of a mother's love bestowed, and of a daughter's love returned.

Gratitude should mingle with our grief to-day. While sorrowing that she should have been taken away, we rejoice that she should have been given us, and that she was spared to live and reign so long. We should be thankful that the approach of death was sufficiently foreseen for the necessary adjustments of official matters to be made ; we should also be thankful that the mistaken prayers of many for the prolongation of her life were not answered, when in the very nature of the case it must have meant lingering without either mental or physical vigor. We should be thankful that the change of sovereigns has come about without any menace to the nations peace, and with so little disturbance of the world's business.

In the same breath we say, "The Queen is dead, long live the King !" It is reassuring to reflect that His Imperial Majesty is the son of our lamented Sovereign, and that it is his expressed determination to follow in the footsteps of his noble mother ; not ruling as an absolute or arbitrary sovereign, but reigning as a constitutional monarch. I am sure we all heartily unite in the prayer that the King of kings may so replenish him with grace that he may always incline to do God's will and walk in his way. And nowhere throughout his broad empire will there be more loyal and devoted subjects than in this Dominion.

It is but a step from contemplation of the Queen's example, which is worth more than many sermons, to the consideration of our text. Many points of this parable of the Talents had their evident fulfilment in her case. If she was like the person in the parable in having received a large trust from her Lord, she was like him also in so using her trust as to double it—yea, more than double it. The talents of the wicked and the slothful were in God's providence given into the hands of her who had ten talents, verifying the principle that to him that hath shall be given, while from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath." And who will

doubt that from the lips of the Lord, she has heard the approving words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Yes, "servant," for while our Sovereign, she humbly, gladly owned herself to be Christ's servant; and not because she was Queen, but because she was a humble believer in Him who is no respecter of persons, we are sure she has entered into the joys of her Lord. The same burial service will be read over her body as over the humblest peasant, and this is proper. There is but one door for high and low, rich and poor into the heavenly fold, and that door is Jesus Christ. The palace of Egypt's king needed the sheltering blood as much as the hovel of the poorest peasant; and the soul of England's great and good Queen required to be cleansed in the blood of Christ. She realized this, and humbly sought shelter beneath that blood. Have you done so? If the greatest and best monarch of the world's greatest empire dared not venture into the holy of holies without the atoning blood, if she needed the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness in which to go to the marriage supper of the Lamb, will *you* go into the presence of the King of kings, trusting to your own morality or good works? Fools may rush in where angels fear to tread, but those who are wise will go in the way of Christ's own teaching.

"Thou hast been faithful over a *few things*?" Are those the words in which God addresses the rulers of an empire on which the sun never sets? Yes, for while great compared with the empires of earth, it is as nothing compared with the boundless realms of God. Earth itself is but a tiny ball compared with the sun, and the merest sand grain in this great universe. "Thou hast been faithful"—Yes, *faithfulness* is the point upon which the award is made. Precisely the same words are spoken to the man who faithfully employed *two* talents as to the one who faithfully employed *five*. And if the man with one talent had been equally faithful in administering his trust, he too would have heard the welcome plaudit of the text; for the main point of this parable is that *equal faithfulness in the*

use of unequal endowments is equally rewarded. Man's honor is according to the measure of our *success*; but God's reward will be according to the measure of our *faithfulness*. Yes, the woman whose sphere is the little realm of home, if she reigns there as a queenly woman or as a womanly queen with the same faithfulness that Her Majesty exemplified in her mightier domain, may hear the same sweet words of approval and reward as have gladdened her. But the tendency is for the one talent people to fail to realize the fact of their trusteeship. We are sure that the man with a million is a trustee, and must give an account to God for the use or abuse of his talent; but we do not realize that the man with but one dollar must do the same. We know that a great railroad should be run upon principles of justice and equity, and feel it a great shame if they over-charge where there is no competition; but the cabman is slow to realize that it is precisely the same thing in principle for him to charge more than his just and equitable fare simply because he can. When a minister of brilliant gifts and the best education ceases labor, we are sure he will be called to account for his unfaithfulness; but when the church member of modest ability is too timid or too self-indulgent to make use of that modest ability in his Master's service, we ought to realize that his unfaithfulness will just as surely be punished as the unfaithfulness of the more talented.

"I will make thee ruler over many things." This brings me to the thought that I wanted most to emphasize. Observe the reward which the Master bestows. What does he propose for the servant who has faithfully managed his trust? "Is it," as Dr. Watson asks, "release from labor and responsibility—a future in contrast with the past? Is it, so to say, retirement and a pension? That would not be absurd, but it would be less than the best. Something more could surely be done with this man's exercised and [developed] gifts—his foresight, prudence, courage, enterprise. The past shapes the future, and this servant, having served his apprenticeship, becomes himself a master, 'ruler over

many things.' " According to Christ, life will be *raised*, not *reversed*. Work will not be closed, it will be emancipated, the servant here becoming a ruler yonder. The fret, the disappointment, the disability will be gone, but the capacity and the labor will remain; and we shall experience the joy of our Lord in perpetual activity and growth. Now this is very different from the idea of the future life which has dominated Christian thought. Heaven has been spoken of and sung of as a place of physical inaction, an endless contemplation of God, or an endless service of praise. The idea has been that while we fulfil the Divine will here in *occupation*, we shall fulfil it there in *adoration*. Busy men, who find even a summer vacation almost intolerable, have been told that when they die they are to enter a church where night and day the ceaseless anthem swells. Faber exclaims—

" Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie,
And gaze and gaze on Thee."

I do not believe that sort of Nirvana would be rapture for all of us; it might for the Christian mystic. We used to hear a hymn about heaven as a place "where congregations ne'er break up and Sabbaths never end." I must confess such a prospect had very little attraction for me as a boy. Schooled in this eschatology of the mystics, I believe many a Christian man has braced himself to face the inevitable and gone into eternity with something of the same feeling as the busy man has in going to a great social function. What a delicious surprise it must be for such men to find that heaven is the continuation of the present life upon a higher level. The gifts which were faithfully laid out and gained a splendid interest will find joyful employment above.